

## Alpelisib

This leaflet is offered as a guide to you and your family. Alpelisib is a targeted (biological) therapy. This group of drugs block the growth and spread of cancer. They target and interfere with the processes in the cells that cause cancer to grow. When used to treat breast cancer, alpelisib is usually taken alongside hormone (endocrine) therapy.

The possible benefits of treatment vary; for some people it may reduce the risk of the cancer coming back, for others it may control the cancer and its symptoms. Your medical team will be happy to answer any questions you have about your treatment. You may also find it useful to refer to the booklet *Chemotherapy, a guide* which gives general information on anti-cancer treatment and the management of side effects.

### Your treatment

Your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a treatment called alpelisib.

Your treatment is prescribed in 4 weekly cycles. Each cycle consists of:

**Alpelisib 300mg taken once a day for 28 days (1 cycle)**

Take immediately following food with a glass of water and swallow whole.

If you vomit after taking a dose, do not repeat the dose. Take your next dose at your normal time.

You will have routine blood tests while on treatment as advised by your medical team. The frequency of these blood tests may decrease once you are established on treatment.

Occasionally we may not be able to go ahead with your treatment until your blood counts are back to a safe level. If this happens, your treatment may be delayed a week or dose reduced. You should continue with your hormone (endocrine) therapy even if your alpelisib is withheld.

This treatment can have serious or possibly life-threatening side effects. It is very important that you report side effects straight away. Don't delay, if you feel unwell, please ring The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658**. The lines are open 24 hours a day.

### Possible side effects

Cancer treatments can cause many different side effect. Some are more likely to occur than others. Everyone is different and not everyone gets all side effects. Most side effects are usually temporary, but in some rare cases they can be life-threatening. It is important to tell your hospital doctor or nurse about any side effects so they can be monitored and, where possible, treated.



## Increased risk of serious infection

You are vulnerable to infection while you are having anti-cancer treatment. Minor infections can become life-threatening in a matter of hours if left untreated. Symptoms of infection include fever, shivering, sweats, sore throat, diarrhoea, discomfort when you pass urine, cough or breathlessness. We recommend that you use a digital thermometer so you can check your temperature. You can buy one from your local chemist.

**If you feel unwell, you have symptoms of an infection or your temperature is 37.5°C or above, or below 36°C contact The Christie Hotline straight away.**

## Common side effects (more than 1 in 10)

Chemotherapy and some cancer treatments can cause many different side effects. Some are more likely to occur than others. Everyone is different and not everyone gets all the side effects. Most side effects are usually temporary, but in some rare cases they can be life-threatening. It is important to tell your hospital doctor or nurse about any side effects so they can be monitored and, where possible, treated.

### • Loss of appetite

If you experience a loss of appetite, please be sure to tell your doctor or nurse at your next hospital visit. Ask staff for a copy of The Christie booklet 'Eating - help yourself' which contains useful suggestions about diet.

### • Anaemia (low number of red blood cells)

While having this treatment you may become anaemic. This may make you feel tired and breathless. Let your medical team know if these symptoms are a problem. You may need a blood transfusion.

### • Blood sugar

This treatment can cause changes to your blood sugars. You will have your fasting blood sugar levels monitored during your treatment (whether you are diabetic or not). If your blood sugar levels are affected, you should speak to your medical team straight away.

### • Diarrhoea

If this becomes a problem at any point during your treatment, please contact The Christie Hotline on 0161 446 3658 for advice. **If you develop severe diarrhoea, it is important to contact The Christie straight away as this may be the sign of a serious infection. Don't delay!**

### • Bruising or bleeding

This treatment can reduce the production of platelets which help the blood clot. Let your doctor know if you have any unexplained bruising or bleeding, such as nosebleeds, bloodspots or rashes on the skin, and bleeding gums. You may need a platelet transfusion.

### • Strange taste

Occasionally during treatment you may experience a strange taste, sometimes described as metallic or bitter. A strongly flavoured sweet or mint will help to disguise this.

### • Decreased appetite

This treatment may reduce your appetite. However, it is important to try to maintain a balanced diet during treatment. Ask staff for a copy of the booklet 'Eating - help yourself', which contains useful suggestions about diet. If you are struggling to maintain this, please contact your GP or medical team for advice.

- **Headaches**

If you start to experience headaches on treatment, please discuss this with your medical team.

- **Nausea and vomiting (sickness)**

The severity of this varies from person to person. Anti-sickness medication may be given along with your treatment to prevent this. You will also be given anti-sickness tablets to take at home. If you continue to feel or be sick, contact your GP or this hospital, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

- **Abdominal pains**

If this occurs – please contact The Christie Hotline for advice.

- **Skin rash**

You may develop a skin rash. This is usually mild and easily treated. Please tell your medical team on your next visit.

- **Sore hands and feet**

PPE (palmar-plantar erythema): The skin on your hands and feet may become very dry, red and sore with some cracking. Please tell your medical team if this happens. Creams can be prescribed to help. Your dose may need to change. Try to keep your hands and feet cool and if possible uncovered.

- **Hair thinning**

Some hair loss may occur during treatment, including body and facial hair. It is advisable to avoid perms, colours, use of hot brushes and vigorous frequent washing that could increase hair loss. Please remember that this is a temporary side effect and your hair will grow back when your treatment is completed. Very rarely, hair loss may be permanent. If you would like an appointment with the wig service, this can be arranged for you by visiting the cancer information centre. It is a good idea to get your wig before you lose a lot of hair which you can then match to your natural colour. Ask the staff for a copy of the 'Wig fitting service at The Christie'.

The Maggie's Centre runs a Talking Heads hair loss support workshop for anyone who is anticipating or experiencing hair loss (both men and women). These sessions cover the practicalities of hair loss as well as offering support with its emotional impact. Contact Maggie's on **0161 641 4848** or email [manchester@maggies.org](mailto:manchester@maggies.org)

- **Lethargy**

Some treatments may make you feel tired and lacking in energy. It can be frustrating when you feel unable to cope with routine tasks. You may benefit from additional support during your treatment. Complementary therapies may be helpful. Speak to your nurse or doctor for further information. If necessary, take time off work. Gentle exercise, such as walking, can be beneficial.

- **Sore mouth**

Your mouth may become sore or dry, or you may notice small mouth ulcers during this treatment. Drinking plenty of fluids and cleaning your teeth regularly and gently with a soft toothbrush can help to reduce the risk of this happening. We can prescribe a mouthwash for you to use during treatment. You can dilute this with water if your mouth is sore. Ask your medical team for further advice. There is also general mouth care information in the chemotherapy booklet. If you continue to have a sore mouth, contact The Christie Hotline.

## • Kidney problems

Due to its red colour, doxorubicin may discolour your urine red or pink for up to 24 to 48 hours following treatment. This treatment can occasionally cause abnormal kidney blood tests. This is rarely very severe, but your kidney function will be monitored every time you come to the clinic for treatment.

## • Liver problems

This treatment can occasionally cause abnormal liver blood tests. This is rarely very severe, but your liver function will be monitored every time you come to the clinic for your treatment.

## Serious and potentially life-threatening side effects

In a small proportion of patients anti-cancer treatment can result in very severe side effects which may rarely result in death. The team caring for you will discuss the risk of these side effects with you.

## • Pneumonitis (breathlessness)

Some patients may experience a feeling of breathlessness, or develop a cough. If this happens please tell medical team, or contact The Christie so that investigations and treatment can be undertaken.

## • Severe skin reactions

If you have a skin reaction you must seek medical attention straight away as this could be serious and require medical treatment. Serious reactions are rare

## • Osteonecrosis of the jaw

This is when there is necrosis ( a loss of jaw bone) or a breakdown of the jaw bone. It is called osteonecrosis of the jaw and can be a serious condition. Some of the symptoms are:

- pain, swelling or infection of the gums.
- loosening of the teeth.
- poor healing of the gums.
- numbness or feeling of heaviness in the jaw.

If you have any of the symptoms listed above or any other dental problems please tell your Christie doctor immediately.

## Other medicines

Please ask your medical team at The Christie for advice about any other medication you are taking, including non-prescribed medicines, complementary therapies and herbal medicines.

## Sex, contraception and fertility

Protecting your partner and contraception: We recommend that you or your partner use a condom during sexual intercourse while you are having the course of treatment. It is dangerous to unborn babies and this will also protect you and your partner from any drugs that may be present in semen and in the vagina. If you suspect that you may be pregnant please tell your doctor **immediately**.

## Fertility

This treatment may affect your ability to have children. Your doctor or nurse should have discussed this with you. If not, please ask them before you start treatment.

## Late side effects

Some side effects may become evident only after a number of years. In reaching any decision with you about treatment, the potential benefit you receive from treatment will be weighed against the risks of serious long term side effects to the heart, lungs, kidneys and bone marrow. With some drugs there is also a small but definite risk of developing another cancer. If any of these problems specifically applies to you, the doctor will discuss these with you and note this on your consent form.

## Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please ring the area where you are having treatment:

- Please call your consultant's secretary or breast cancer nurse

**For advice ring The Christie Hotline on 0161 446 3658 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)**

Your consultant is: .....

Your hospital number is: .....

Your key worker is: .....

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If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham, Salford or Macclesfield. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



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urgent support and specialist advice  
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